

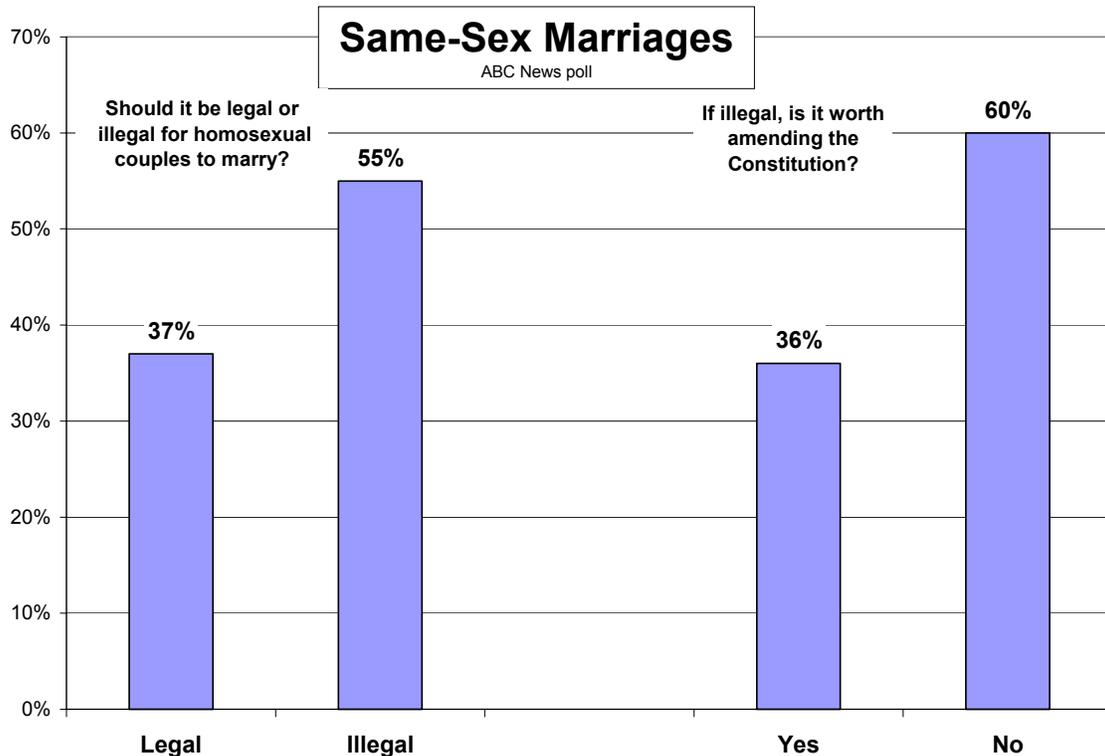
Most Oppose Homosexual Marriage, But Don't Want to Amend Constitution

A majority of Americans opposes allowing homosexual couples to legally marry – but most also say it's not worth amending the U.S. Constitution to make it so.

Thirty-seven percent of Americans in this ABC News poll say same-sex marriages should be legal, while 55 percent say they should be illegal. But when opponents are asked if it's worth amending the Constitution to ban such marriages, six in 10 of them say it's not.

As a net total of the population, this poll finds that 20 percent of Americans favor a constitutional ban on gay marriages; 33 percent oppose such marriages but wouldn't amend the Constitution; and 37 percent would make them legal.

Other polls have found much more support for a constitutional amendment, for two possible reasons. Some pose the issue in a single question, conflating views on same-sex marriage with views on an amendment to ban them. This poll asks about the two issues separately. Also, this poll asks if it's *worth* amending the U.S. Constitution, inviting consideration of the amendment process.



In July, George W. Bush said marriage should be between a man and a woman, and "we ought to codify that one way or the other." A Constitutional amendment to define marriage as such has been proposed in Congress, and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist has said he'd support it.

GROUPS – Age plays a large role in views on same-sex marriages. A slight majority of people age 18-34 think homosexual marriage should be legal; that dives to 20 percent among those age 65 and older. Nevertheless, only 23 percent of older Americans who oppose such marriages say it's worth amending the Constitution to do so. Among the smaller group of young adults who oppose gay marriage, more – 47 percent – favor a constitutional amendment.

Men and women are similar in their opposition to same-sex marriage and amending the constitution to make it illegal, but marital status and partisanship come into play. Forty-eight percent of people who are not married say homosexual marriages should be legal, compared with 28 percent of married people. And while Democrats and independents split on the issue, nearly three-quarters of Republicans think such marriages should be illegal. Most opponents in the three partisan groups, however, also oppose a constitutional ban.

	Same-sex marriage:		If illegal, amend constitution?	
	Legal	Illegal	Yes	No
All	37%	55	36	60
Age 18-34	51	46	47	47
65+	20	69	23	73
Democrats	47	45	32	65
Independents	44	47	35	59
Republicans	23	73	38	58
Married	28	63	34	61
Not married	48	47	38	58

CIVIL UNIONS – By 51-40 percent, Americans also oppose allowing homosexual couples to form legally recognized civil unions, which would give them the same legal rights of married couples in areas such as health insurance, inheritance and pension coverage.

Here, there's a gender gap: While men oppose civil unions by 55-36 percent, women divide 48-44 percent. Support for such unions peaks – indeed it reaches a majority – among younger Americans and Democrats.

Views on civil unions and same-sex marriages largely coincide. However, 10 percent of those who oppose homosexual marriages do support allowing same-sex couples to form civil unions.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone Sept. 3-7, 2003, among a random national sample of 1,028 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Dalia Sussman.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:
<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

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Results follow:

1. Do you think homosexual couples should or should not be allowed to form legally recognized civil unions, giving them the legal rights of married couples in areas such as health insurance, inheritance and pension coverage?

	Should	Should not	No opin.
9/7/03	40	51	9

2. Do you think it should be legal or illegal for homosexual couples to get married?

	Legal	Illegal	No opin.
9/7/03	37	55	7

3. (IF ILLEGAL, Q2) Is it worth amending the U.S. Constitution to make it illegal for homosexual couples to get married, or not worth it?

	Worth it	Not worth it	No opin.
9/7/03	36	60	5

2/3 NET TABLE:

		-----Illegal-----				No	
	Legal	NET	Amend	Constitution	Don't Amend	DK	opin.
9/7/03	37	55		20	33	3	7

END